

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH May 25, 2010

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

MINUTES

The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee held a meeting on this date at 6:00 p.m. in the Exeter-West Greenwich Jr. – Sr. High School Library. Members present were Susan DeSack, Chairperson; Teri Maia-Cicero, Vice-Chairperson; Gregory Coutcher, Clerk; Mary Walsh; Valerie Zuercher, (arrived at 6:35 p.m.); Mark Rafanelli, and Robert Bollengier. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar, Director of Administration Robert V. Ross, Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar, and Student Member Raymond Moore were present.

ORDER – Chairperson DeSack called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and Member Rafanelli read the District Mission Statement.

Open Forum – None

Recognitions/Achievements – Mark Rafanelli-RIASC Leadership Development Academy – Chair DeSack recognized Member Rafanelli for successfully completing the RI Association of School Committees Leadership Development Academy. On behalf of the School Committee, Chair DeSack offered congratulations and presented

Member Rafanelli with a School Committee Apple Recognition Award.

Member Rafanelli gave a brief overview of the program, which he said, was very worthwhile and enjoyable.

Presentation – Student Member Report – Student Member Raymond Moore reported that the last two weeks have been filled with many activities and events. Students are excited to get to the end of the year events. Overall, students are satisfied with the situation right now in school, but considering the recent vote at the District Financial Meeting, students are quite concerned that with the upcoming budget student activities, sports, and other events will be affected. Student Member Moore said that he hopes the district will try its best to keep these activities in place, in order to maintain student morale and to keep the senior high more well rounded. Chair DeSack told Raymond that the School Committee is also concerned about what happened at the District Financial Meeting.

Reading Curriculum Update – ELA Reading Committee member Debbie Blake updated members on the reading curriculum work to date. She reported that the ELA Committee consists of ten individuals; three are administrators and all are reading specialists. So far, the committee has invested 22-hours and its goal is to revise and develop the rough draft of the EWG Reading Curriculum to align it with the GLE's (Grade Level Expectations) and secure it in current reading research and theory. Ms. Blake gave an overview of accomplishments to date, what needs to happen next in the process,

and the anticipated outcomes. Ms. Blake reported that the committee has contacted and met with two different publishers for piloting reading programs in the fall of 2010 for the entire 2010/11 school year.

The ELA committee will be working to

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continue the rough draft and anticipates to complete and update the K-6 Reading Curriculum by January 2011. Ms. Blake gave an overview of the piloting process and said that pilots are at no cost to the district. The committee anticipates selecting a new reading curriculum by June 2011 to bring to the School Committee for approval. Dr. Geismar reported that the cost to implement a K – 6 program with the publisher the ELA committee is presently talking with is about \$210,000. The district will be able to purchase the program over a period of two to three years. Dr. Geismar gave a brief report on the status of the secondary level reading committee's work to date.

Local Advisory Committee Update – Local Advisory Committee, (LAC) Chairperson Mary Beth Cournoyer gave the annual LAC on Special Education Report outlining the activities that took place this school year. She said the LAC had a successful year this year and Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar and special education teacher Sharon Campbell have been outstanding, and Dr. Geismar has always made himself available to the LAC. She requested that the School

Committee sign the by-laws to allow the LAC to continue. Each member signed to approve the by-laws of the EWG, RI Local Advisory Committee on Special Education.

Special Education Presentation – Director of Special Education Carmella Farrar gave a PowerPoint Presentation outlining what the Special Education Department has accomplished this past school year and what will be done moving forward. Some topics Ms. Farrar touched upon were Special Education Enrollment, Disabilities, Consolidated Resource Plan Expenditures, Preschool Budget 09/10, AARA Funds, and Early Intervention. She advised that the reopening of Exeter House will have an impact on the district. There are eight beds at Exeter House, and that may mean additional hires if those students are integrated into the district.

Member Zuercher arrived at this time, (6:35 p.m.).

Ms. Farrar reported on Child Outreach, Occupational Therapy, and the Parent Survey Results 2009/10. In closing, Ms. Farrar said some challenges in the coming years include budget and mental health issues in young children.

ROUTINE ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA- Superintendent Geismar gave an overview of the Consent Agenda. Dr. Geismar referenced item VI. B. 2. a. and said that he is recommending this request is denied.

Clerk Coutcher requested to pull item, VI. B. 2. a. from the consent agenda for discussion based on the Superintendent's recommendation to deny the request.

Member Bollengier made a motion to accept the consent agenda with item, VI. B. 2. a. pulled. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

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The following items were approved:

A. Approval of Minutes - Regular Minutes of May 11, 2010

B. Personnel Items

1. Appointments

2. Leaves of Absence

a. Item pulled

3. Resignations – (As recommended by the Superintendent, with Regret)

a. Letter of Resignation from Elena Taylor-Garcia from her position as

.8FTE ESL Teacher, effective May 24, 2010

4. Grievances

5. Non-Renewals

a. Please see enclosed Council-94 List

6. Recalls

7. Sabbaticals

C. Bills – In the amount of \$323,425.55

D. Home School Approvals

End Consent Agenda

Correspondence – (1) Copies of Resolutions approved at the Barrington School Committee Meeting held on Thursday, May 6, 2010; (2) April 29, 2010 Letter to Chair DeSack from Carolyn Dias of RIDE regarding RIDE's Proposed Funding Formula; (3) Technology Proficiency Results – Jr. High School; (4) EWG 2009/10 Jr. High and Elementary Suspension Report through May 15, 2010; (5) EWG 2009/10 Sr. High Suspension Report through May 15, 2010; (6) EWG 2009/10 Sr. High Discipline Report through May 15, 2010

Budget Update – 2010 - 2011 – Superintendent Geismar said that he is looking at ways to cut \$680,000 from the budget. He said he is looking at all out of district tuitions and transportation. In terms of certified and non-certified positions, he is looking at the following cuts:

- .5 FTE Nurse**
- .4 FTE Special Education Teacher Jr. High – (which is not a current position)**
- .4 FTE Physical Education/Technology Teacher – Jr. High**
- One English Teacher – Sr. High**
- At least a .5 FTE Senior Project Coordinator**

- **Two Media Aids at the Sr. High and Metcalf School**
- **Some Athletics**
- **Activities**
- **One Administrator**

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Dr. Geismar said cuts are based on enrollment and will keep the District within class size of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Another area that may need to be looked at is Physical Education classes. Dr. Geismar advised he is still working to make more cuts and is looking for School Committee input. What will be presented in two-weeks might

change. These cuts equal a little more than \$300,000. Chair DeSack pointed out that the District will still need to find an additional \$300,000 to cut. These proposed cuts are in addition to the cuts previously made to get to the 3% budget proposal. Clerk Coutcher requested that when the final cuts are presented to the committee, to include a description to show how students will be affected by the cuts. Vice Chair Cicero agreed and said that she would like a visual of exactly what these cuts mean. Chair DeSack said that over the last 2 years, the district has been level funded, many changes have occurred, and lines are getting lost. As a School Committee, members may wish to tell people the full picture of what has been lost

over the last 3-years. She said that the committee will hang on diligently to keep high school sports in tack. Director of Administration Robert Ross said it is important to keep in mind the funding formula again. There may be substantial cuts on the state side.

Member Walsh expressed her opinion that it is time the School Committee generates a Resolution aimed at districts having to pay for private school busing. Mr. Ross reported that the end of year non-public transportation projection is \$519,000. Attorney Brad Gorham advised that it is state law to provide non-public transportation. He recommended inviting the senators and representatives for the two towns to a School Committee meeting to communicate that it is critical now to change this law if possible. Member Walsh recommended writing letters to other school committees to do the same and to make the general public aware of how much non public transportation costs and where the funding comes from. She said that Rhode Island is the only state that has this law. Chair DeSack suggested sending letters to other superintendents and school committees to see if they will come to a general meeting at which all representatives and senators will be invited. She asked Dr. Geismar to draft a letter to bring back for School Committee review. She recommended drafting letters to Tim Duffy of the Rhode Island Association of School Committees, to all school committee chairpersons, and to all superintendents. Member Walsh said that this has been a fight of superintendents and school

committees in the past. She voiced her opinion once more that the general public needs to be informed. Clerk Coutcher suggested involving Larry Purtill of NEARI as well. Director of Administration Robert Ross advised that the state is currently looking at taking over all out-of-district transportation. Member Walsh said that this would then be a good time to put pressure on. In response to Chair DeSack's inquiry, Member Walsh said that she is willing to coordinate this effort.

Members further discussed additional recommendations to cut the budget such as the cost of Senior Project, reorganizing the Metcalf School band program schedule, closing Lineham School, sports busing, and requesting additional concessions.

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Dr. Geismar said that he will continue to work on the budget and will continue this item to the next meeting agenda. He said that the district is still left in limbo by the state and does not know what its revenues are yet. Chair DeSack said that before the start of the next school year, law dictates the School Committee must put forth a good faith budget. The budget will always be fluid and the School Committee needs to know right now that it will be able to operate within the dollar amount it has been given.

NEW BUSINESS – Consider Citizen’s Request for a Continuation of the District Financial Meeting – Community member Joe Harrington respectfully voiced his opinion that the School Committee did not act properly by not calling a final vote on the budget in its amended form at the District Financial Meeting, (DFM) on May 17. Since the budget was never brought to the floor in its amended form for a vote for passage; no budget was passed. Mr. Harrington referred to Robert’s Rules of Order, which he said backs his opinion. He said, additionally, Chair DeSack and documents provided at the DFM stated that the motion would be voted on in its amended form. Everyone was waiting to speak about the budget. Mr. Harrington expressed his opinion that the committee needs to right the wrong and reconvene so everyone can vote on the budget. Mr. Harrington reported that he contacted the Attorney General’s office who advised that the proper process is to present his concerns to the School Committee. Chair called upon Attorney Brad Gorham to speak to this matter. Attorney Gorham said that Robert’s Rule does not apply to district and town financial meetings. Robert’s Rules apply to parliamentary bodies. At the DFM, the sense of the voting body was very clear. If the body did not like the amendment, it would not have passed the amendment. To take another vote in the exact dollar amount would have been illogical and made no sense. Chair DeSack agreed that if the voting body did not like the amendment they would not have passed it. She said that she was perfectly clear when she gave voting instructions. Following a lengthy debate with several audience members, Chair DeSack asked if any member desired to move for a third District Financial

Meeting. No such motion was made. Chair DeSack thanked Mr. Harrington for his support and said the committee will stand with what was decided.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Fundraising Opportunity – Attorney Gorham advised that he reviewed the latest Agreement for fundraising opportunity with Merchant Card Services and the incorporated changes seem to be in order. Chair DeSack said that she thinks it is important to delegate where the monies will go. She asked for members' input. Member Bollengier pointed out that the School Committee is just receiving this document tonight in the supplemental packet. He has not had a chance to read it and he likes to read contracts first. Chair DeSack asked for members' input on where the funds should be earmarked. Following a brief discussion, consensus was to see that funds go directly to benefit students, and to have Mr. Ross contact other districts to research what they do in these situations. Chair DeSack asked Mr. Ross to draft the language to the School Committee by next week and said that a vote will follow.

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Sr. Project Steering Committee – Chair DeSack reported that the Sr. Project Steering Committee has been constituted. Principal Butler listed the fourteen voting members of the steering committee. He

reported that the May 21, 2010 meeting was an organizational meeting and it was very successful. Future meetings will be scheduled on Fridays at 2:00 p.m. and Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. The next meeting is June 2, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. The charge of the committee is to revamp and look at the existing program and to pull out and make it less intrusive.

Review Charter Amendments from Attorney Gorham – Attorney Brad Gorham passed out copies of the Charter for members to see how the amendments will impact the Charter. In addition, he passed out a single page document that read as follows:

The “Charter” for the Exeter-West Greenwich School District prescribes the following procedure for Amendments proposed by the School Committee: The Amendment is proposed by a majority vote of all the members of the school committee. The clerk of the committee mails or delivers a notice in writing to the town councils of the member towns that a proposal (or proposals) for amendment has been made with a copy of the proposal(s). The town councils then include in the warrant for the next annual financial town meeting, or a special financial town meeting called for the purpose, an article stating the proposal or the substance thereof. The amendment takes effect upon its acceptance by both member towns.

The School Committee motions should be stated as follows:

1. Amend Section I (A) of the Charter of the Exeter-West

Greenwich

Regional School District to read as follows:

(A) Composition.

The powers and duties of the regional school district shall be vested in and exercised by a regional district school committee, hereinafter sometimes referred to as the committee. Commencing with the 2012 election the committee shall consist of seven (7) members, with four (4) members from the town having the higher population and three (3) from the town with the lower population as determined by the most recent census. All members shall be elected at biennial town elections. All members shall serve until their respective successors are appointed and qualified.

2. Amend the Charter of the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School

District to provide for consideration of the annual budget of the school

district to be voted upon in an all-day referendum in the member towns to

be held on the second or third Monday of April each year to be scheduled

by the school committee, with approval obtained by a majority vote of the

combined total vote of Exeter and West Greenwich. If the proposed

annual budget is rejected, the school committee may schedule

further all-

day referenda to consider revised annual budgets.

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Adoption of this amendment will amend Section V by eliminating the

regional district financial meeting; Section VII(C) 3 & 4 to provide for the

all-day referendum; amend Section VII(D) & (E) to reference all-day

referendum instead of the district financial meeting.

3. Amend Section XI of the Charter of the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional

School District to provide that future Charter Amendments shall take

effect if approved by a majority vote of the combined total vote of Exeter

and West Greenwich, such vote to be taken at an all-day referendum held

in the members town to be scheduled by the school committee.

Member Bollengier moved for adopting the language of amending section I (A) of the Charter of the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional

School District to read as follows, all is set forth in subparagraph (A) Composition as prepared by Attorney Brad Gorham. Member Rafanelli seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. The motion carried.

Member Bollengier said he submits for motion to the full School Committee that the School Committee consider to amend the Charter of the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District to provide for consideration of the annual budget to be voted upon in an all-day referendum. All is set forth in the language in paragraph 2 as prepared by council for the committee Brad Gorham, with the amendment of ancillary sections as is sited at the bottom of the amended language. Clerk Coutcher seconded the motion.

Attorney Gorham answered members' clarifying questions.

Voted 6 – 1 in favor. Chair DeSack voted no. The motion carried.

Member Bollengier moved for consideration by School Committee vote a motion to amend Section XI of the Charter of the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District, to provide that future Charter Amendments shall take effect if approved by a majority vote of the combined total vote of Exeter and West Greenwich, pursuant to the language in subparagraph 3 prepared by Attorney Brad Gorham. Clerk Coutcher Seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 1 in favor. Chair DeSack voted no. The motion passed.

Clerk Coutcher handed the single page document prepared by Attorney Gorham to Exeter Town Council Member Arlene Hicks and West Greenwich Town Manager Kevin Breene. Attorney Gorham advised each Town should put these three amendments on the Warrant(s) for their Town Financial Meetings as separate votes.

Transportation Update – Director of Administration Robert Ross reported the latest figures from the state run out of district transportation is projecting a positive balance of approximately \$25,264. Currently, Ocean State Transit is looking at whether it is feasible to bring back the state run routes to the District. If this holds true and if EWG can

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demonstrate that taking these six buses back will result in a cost savings, RIDE will relinquish the routes to the District.

Capital Project Update – Director of Administration Robert Ross answered Member Bollengier's inquiries regarding the state reimbursement. Mr. Ross said he has a call into the state to ensure the District is hitting all its marks.

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) – Dr. Geismar advised there are still issues pending regarding the SEVP. This item will be brought back at a future date.

Reports/Comments – Attorney Brad Gorham offered further advice to Member Walsh and the committee regarding seeking to change the non-public transportation law. He referenced an earlier case brought against the state by EWG in federal district court claiming non-public transportation to be unconstitutional because it involved schools in religious matters. Because of that case, legislature cut out-of-district transportation down to five regions. Attorney Gorham advised that although it would be very expensive, it might be worthwhile to bring suit yet again, and to involve other school districts. He said that litigation costs could be as much as \$40,000 to \$50,000.

Chair DeSack reverted to item, VI. B. 2. a. which Clerk Coutcher requested to pull from the consent agenda for discussion .

Clerk Coutcher made a motion to deny the request to VI. B. 2. a. for a continuation of a leave of absence. Member Bollengier seconded the motion. Voted 6 – 1 in favor. Member Walsh voted no. The motion carried.

The following consent agenda item was denied:

VI. Routine Items

Consent Agenda

B. Personnel Items

- a. Letter from Kristen Marx requesting to continue her current**

unpaid leave of absence for the 2010-2011 school year

Important Dates and Meetings – Thursday, June 3, 2010-Honors Night; Wednesday, June 9, 2010-School Committee Meeting; Friday, June 11, 2010-Last Day Seniors; Saturday, June 12, 2010-Graduation 7:pm Ryan Center; Tuesday, June 22, 2010-School Committee Meeting-(Facilities Presentation); Friday, June 25, 2010-Last Day of School

EXECUTIVE SESSION – RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-5 – Vice Chair Cicero moved to go into Executive Session at 8:35 p.m. in accordance with 42-46-5 (2) – CBA –

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(C-94/TA)-Negotiation Discussion and/or Pending Litigation and 42-46-5 (a)(1) - Personnel. Member Zuercher seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

Meeting recessed to Executive Session at 8:35 p.m.

Member Bollengier moved to reconvene to Open Session. Member Walsh seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

Meeting reconvened to Open Session at 8:50 p.m.

No votes were taken during Executive Session.

Adjournment - Member Walsh moved to adjourn. Vice Chair Cicero seconded the motion. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

ROBIN CERIO

CLERK